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*How to Watch
and Understand Football*
Percy D. Haughton

4007.452



HOW TO WATCH & UNDERSTAND FOOTBALL

BY 4007.452
PERCY D. HAUGHTON
HARVARD COACH, 1908-1916



MARSHALL JONES COMPANY
BOSTON
1922
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June 5, 1936

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THE PLIMPTON PRESS • NORWOOD • MASSACHUSETTS
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

FOOTBALL

and How to Watch It

CHAPTER I

HOW TO WATCH AND UNDERSTAND FOOTBALL

ARE you ready, Harvard? ” “Are you ready, Yale? ” The referee blows his whistle.

It is a supreme moment. The pent-up feelings of the past year are suddenly released and one is brought face to face with the realization that within the coming two hours the pendulum of the Fates will swing either to victory or defeat.

Oh, the glory of victory! The heroes it produces, the congratulations it calls forth! The supreme happiness and intense satisfaction entailed more than repay all the preparation and the strain of a season's work; and besides, the world loves a winner.

In utter contrast, consider the sting of defeat. We have all seen the crestfallen players limping dejectedly from the field, but the real, dull pain of defeat comes after the physical weariness has worn off, when the mind persists in reverting to that everlasting “if.” “If,” soliloquizes the Coach, “I had not been swayed by others but had only planned my defense according

to my own judgment, that winning play of our opponents would never have been successful."

"If," moans each of the players, "I had only done so and so, they would never have licked us."

So the wound is constantly kept open and before a healthy cure can be effected there follows a distinct tendency toward misunderstanding, lack of confidence, and sometimes actual dissension in the camp of the vanquished. It is a wretched situation.

If it is one of the big final games of the season to which we are going, I trust we have allowed plenty of time on account of the congestion of traffic — the neck of the bottle — which always occurs at the approach to the field, and have arrived at least twenty minutes ahead of the scheduled time of the game.

Now this is an extremely difficult feat to accomplish, as our gracious hostess insists on delaying luncheon until her entire party has arrived, and our convivial host will not be dissuaded from "showing us a little attention." Other little five-minute delays keep cropping up and before we realize it, we are caught in the maelstrom of the crowd and, after a thorough bumping about among people who all seem to be unusually large and good-naturedly rough, we arrive too late for the opening play of the game.

Let us assume, however, that we have arrived in good season. The choicest seats are naturally considered to be at midfield, although if one has drawn a goal-line seat great consolation is often derived from the fact that the most vital play of the game happens right "under one's nose."

Few people realize what a tremendous coigne of vantage is gained by viewing the game from a height sufficient to obtain an aero-view, so that one player's body does not hide another's. The players are thus diagramed, as it were, and seen from a position far enough removed to include in the field of vision all the members of both teams when lined up in scrimmage formation, except those players of the defense who are stationed thirty to forty yards back of the scrimmage line. But one should understand that, at this distance, the speed of the players is not so apparent, and one does not see individual facial expressions nor hear the impact of contending players as plainly as from the sideline seats. Nevertheless, for a comprehensive view and understanding of the game as a whole, I strongly recommend the elevated location.

When once in your seat note the position of the score board so that when the game begins you can readily ascertain what down it is and how much distance must be gained; then, when the teams come on the field for preliminary practice, pick out the noted players by comparing the numbers they wear with your program. Watch the style and performance of the various punters and, when the elevens line up for signal practice, note the offensive arrangement of the two elevens.

While the teams are warming up, it is interesting to consider that those players out there, although they look like gladiators in their football togs, are mere boys from eighteen to twenty-two years old. They have been through weeks of steady practice under the direction of expert coaches, sometimes hard

Plate II. A PLUNGE PLAY

THE offense are seen advancing from left to right. The line has through a superior charge obtained a distinct advantage over their opponents and formed a pocket into which the runner is darting. One of the defense (1) threatens to spoil the play but as the runner is moving fast it is doubtful if he is stopped by this player, especially as he is tackling high.

Certain of the line and backfield may be seen as interferers on the second line of defense, and the offensive player on the extreme right is going ahead on the third line, the shadow of which is here represented.

Had the spectator been watching the runner only, he would have failed to see the complete development of this play.

Harvard vs. Centre College 1920.

Note: In all pictures the team having possession of the ball will be mentioned first.

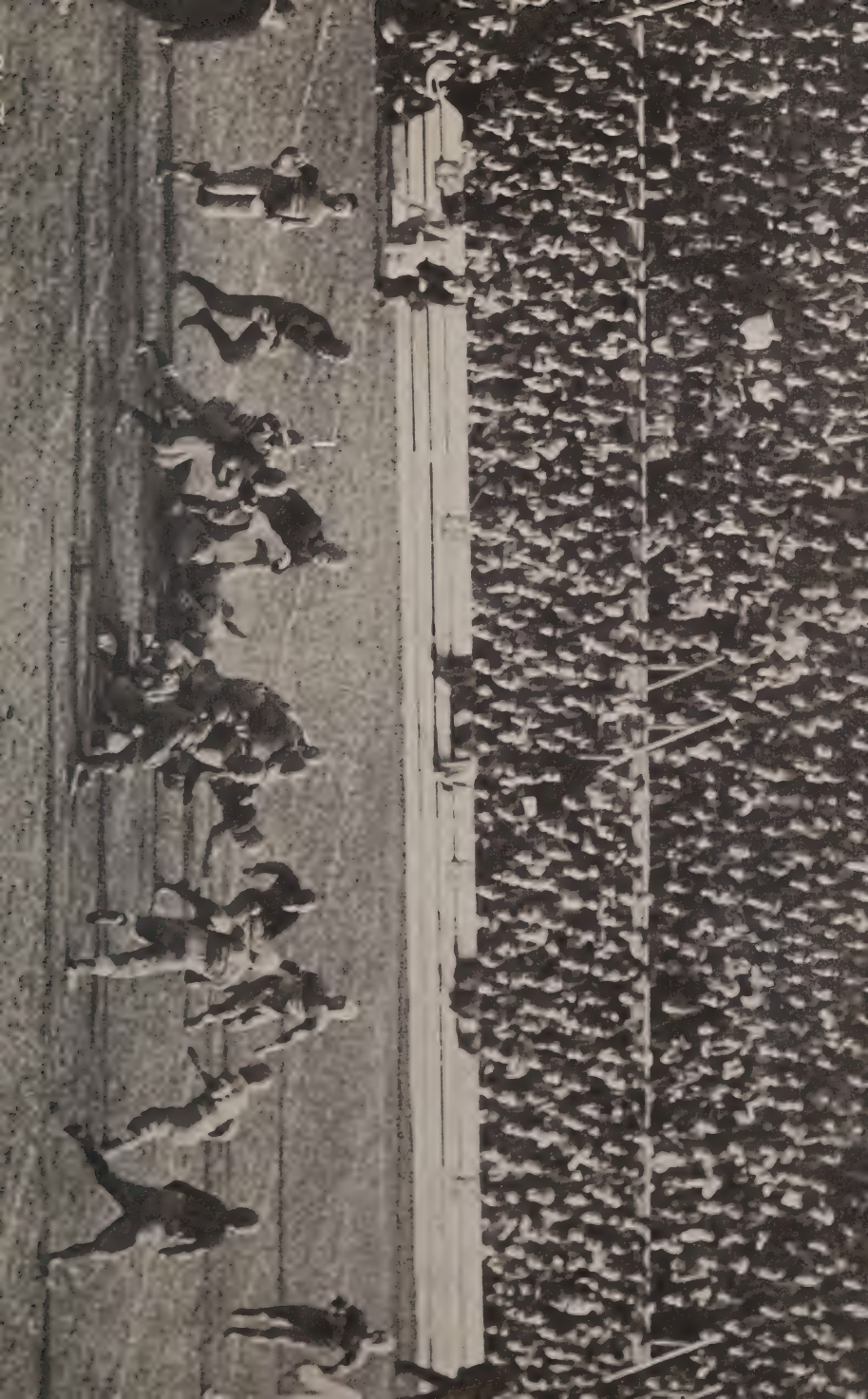




Plate III. A SLANT OUTSIDE OF TACKLE

A

TWO interferers have put the left defensive end (1) completely out of commission. He may be seen on the ground at the left of the picture. Two more interferers are protecting the runner from the left tackle (2) who is recovering from contact with the line.

As the runner is swerving outward these interferers will probably go against the defense halfbacks and the player on the extreme right will also be menaced by the lineman who is approaching him.

Two of the defense may be seen following in the wake of the runner. Neither will catch him but their position emphasizes that offensive speed is of vital importance.

The offense here has acquired tremendous superiority over the defense.

Yale vs. Harvard 1921.

A SWEEP FROM OPEN FORMATION

B

THE results are very similar to those shown in the upper picture. Here again the offense have shut off the defense right end (1), have boxed the left tackle (2) leaving three interferers free ahead of the runner. Notice the splendid piece of interference against player (3).

The runner is carrying the ball in his hands. He has evidently "faked" a forward pass, which accounts for the hesitating positions of the second and third line of defense. They have been forced to guard their respective zones until they could diagnose the nature of the play. They will now have a difficult task to stop the runner who is so thoroughly screened by interferers.

This play gained fifteen yards, the runner being forced out of bounds on the farther side of the field.

Harvard vs. Centre College 1920.

taskmasters, gruelling drills in fair and foul weather, and long scrimmages which have tested the temper and calibre of each man. They have kept strict training. They have been told what to eat and what not to eat, smoking has been forbidden and regular hours insisted upon. In short, they are in as perfect physical and mental condition as careful supervision and common sense can insure.

The mental attitude is of extreme importance. Many hours have been spent by the coaches on the psychology of the game and in getting the boys into the frame of mind that knows no fear, in instilling the spirit of fight, clean, manly fight, without which no big game is ever won, and in giving them confidence in their own ability, yet stopping short of the point of overconfidence, always a very difficult thing to do.

It also should be remembered that those boys know something more than how to kick a ball and run with it. They have been chosen for their brains as well as for their brawn. It is obvious that they know their own plays and can execute them like clockwork; but it is not always appreciated that for many weeks before the big game, those men, besides perfecting their own play, have to learn and absorb the style of play of their opponents. That knowledge, of course, is brought to the coaching staff by those who have seen the opponents in action, and it is imparted to the players by means of blackboard talks with elaborate diagrams, and, frequently, in the larger colleges, for a week or two before the big games, the second team

is schooled in the style of play to be used by the opponents and is sent against the varsity in practice games every afternoon.

When the brief preliminary practice is finished both teams usually withdraw from the field until within a few minutes of the scheduled time of play, while the cheering sections have their turn, followed by a general settling down in anticipation of the game. Look about you in this interim. Behold the serried tiers of humanity, every seat occupied by an intensely partisan spectator. Observe the color effect of flags, ladies' hats and the flowers worn by both men and women slightly dimmed by a film of smoke from thousands of cigars and cigarettes. It is a most impressive spectacle.

As the time approaches "zero" hour, there are a few minutes of awesome hush which spreads rapidly over the amphitheatre and one can feel one's nerves beginning to tingle in anticipation of the appearance of the teams. Of a sudden there is a slight stir about the portal where the players are to make their entry. Those nearby crane forward. The police push aside the crowd and, like lions loosed, one team — forty strong — bounds into the arena. On the instant pandemonium breaks loose. In the midst of and above the tumult an organized cheer — the best of the whole afternoon, one that rakes the spine and vibrates in every nerve-center — is given for the heroes.

Few spectators realize what a tremendous inspiration this is to the players. Many people think that cheers are only stage-play. They are not; in fact, well-

Plate IV. A RUSH WHICH FAILED

THE runner (3) is seen firmly tackled by two of the defense on the line of scrimmage. However, the faithful interference has rightly assumed the play will be a success and is attempting to clean up the secondary defense. The defensive player (1) in foreground has succeeded in dodging the interferer. In this respect as much cleverness is often shown as in the case where the runner tries to evade the tackler.

Defensive player (2) is well prepared for the impending shock from interferer. He is not only ready to dodge, but has both hands extended with which to prevent the interferer getting close to his body. All of the defense are trained to rid themselves of their opponents by these methods.

Princeton vs. Harvard 1920.

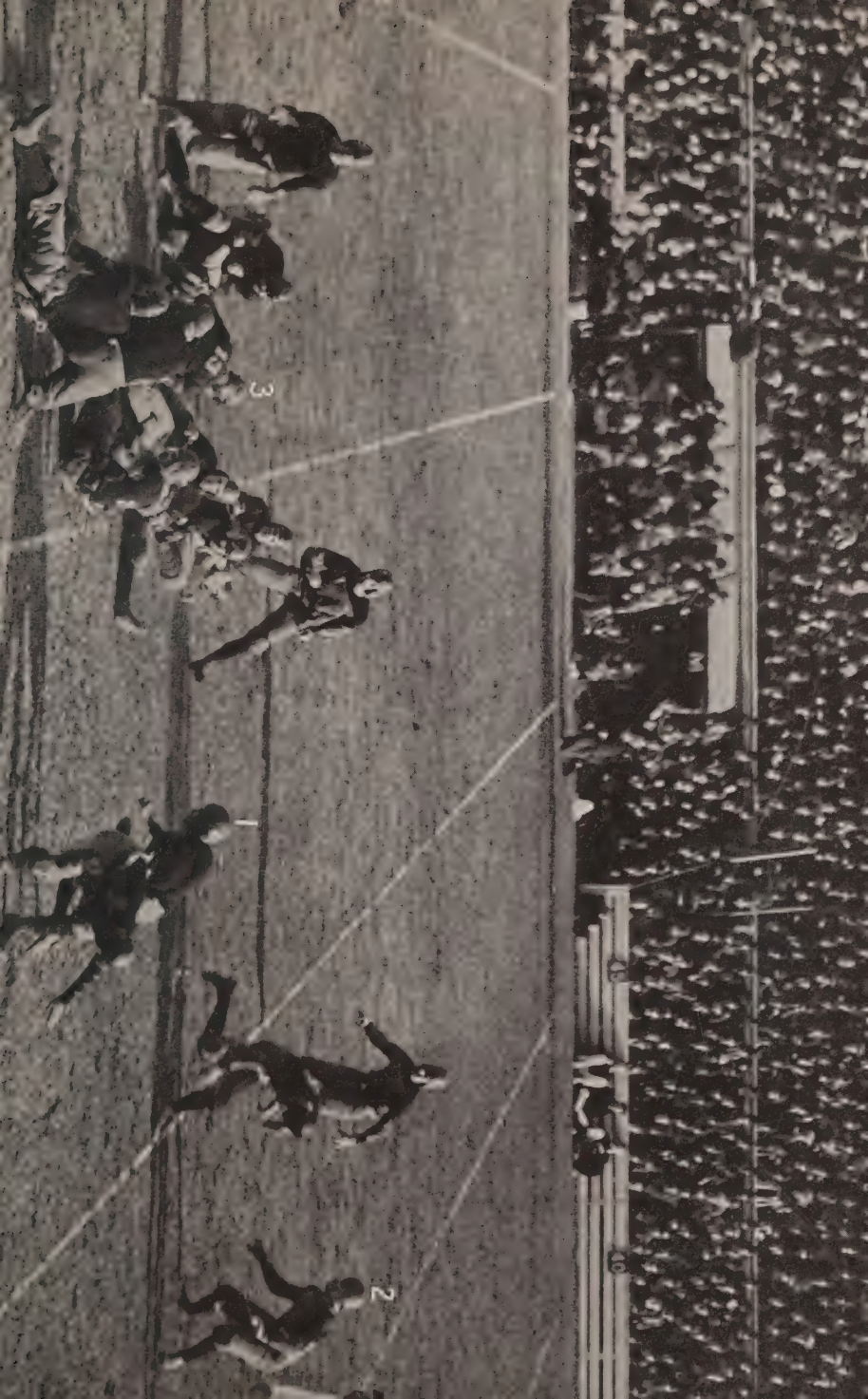




Plate V. A SUCCESSFUL SWEEP

THE offense are here depicted flanking the defense. The defensive left end on his hands and knees has evidently missed his tackle, as there is no interference near him and the runner (No. 1 on his back) is well outside of him.

The defensive left wing halfback is attempting to tackle the runner, but notice that the latter is warding off the impending tackle by the use of his left arm. In this case he was eminently successful and the play gained twenty yards. This "straightarm" used in conjunction with a dodge is the most effective method of eluding the defense in the open field.

Vale vs. Harvard 1921

conducted cheers at the proper time are indispensable to the morale of the players.

A moment after the entrance of the first team a like scene is enacted on the opposite side of the field, and after the respective captains have shaken hands in midfield and the referee tossed a coin for choice of goal, the two teams rush onto the field and take position for the opening play.

Before the game actually begins, however, it may be helpful to describe briefly some of the principles upon which football is based and some of the fine points, — sometimes termed “inside stuff” — not readily understood by the average spectator. Note that I say “average” and the term is used advisedly, for it includes men who have not made a study of the game and an ever-increasing number of women who witness football contests in blissful ignorance not only of the higher technique, but even of the simplest rudiments. To them I trust these points will not only be enlightening but will add zest to their interest. I should mention that this section contains only a brief description. The full subject with reference to its history and present status, the offense and defense, and the mental, moral, physical and medical aspects of the sport, will be discussed later.

I warn you that parts of this chapter may appear to be frightfully serious and complex, but we are dealing with a game properly described by these adjectives and if you really want to enjoy the game you had best make up your mind that certain principles must be clearly understood and a great many A B C's

digested before you really "know what the game is all about" and before you can recognize good play from bad.

So let us start our lesson with the following explanation. The team in possession of the ball is termed the "Offense" and the side not in possession of it the "Defense." These expressions will be used throughout to designate the team referred to.

The tactics employed by the offense to advance the ball are known as the attack, which is made by means of (1) Rushing, (2) Forward Passing, (3) Kicking and (4) by Deception, or by a combination of any two of the above. These salient arms of attack are subdivided as follows:

1. The Rush, into:

a. Plunges, which comprise all plays of a straight-ahead nature, the great majority of which are directed at or between the two guards on the defense and usually executed by the heaviest player in the offensive backfield. Plays of this class should gain a short distance consistently.

b. Slants, those plays which are directed on either side of the defensive tackles, the majority of which should gain a greater distance, but not so consistently as plunges. Small losses occur at times.

c. Sweeps, which are, as the word indicates, plays directed at the flanks of the defense wherein the fastest back is used to carry the ball. Sometimes called "long gainers" — lacking in the consistency of slants and subject to greater losses.

d. Reverse plays, which comprise all plays which

change their direction and are of a deceptive character, to which may be added trick plays that have for their chief value the element of surprise. Wholly lacking in consistency, they are eminently successful in a small percentage of the number of times tried.

2. The Forward Pass, which may be grouped into:

a. Short, swift tosses to a point about on the extended scrimmage lines.

b. Throws directed into spaces or zones between the wing halfbacks on the defense.

c. Long heaves directed away from such defensive players as are stationed say twenty-five to thirty yards back of the scrimmage line.

Forward Passes are all dangerous as they are susceptible to interception by the defense. They are, however, an invaluable weapon of attack not only as a means of gaining distance, but also as a constant threat, thus weakening the defense against rushes and kicks.

3. The Kick, divided into:

a. The Punt, which is usually executed at a point from eight to ten yards back of the scrimmage line. It is invariably employed in lieu of the surrender of the ball on downs. It should average say thirty-five yards net gain.

b. The Drop, or Placement Kick, made from a similar position and for the purpose of scoring a field goal. The placement kick is also used after a fair catch for try at field goal. At the start of the game, the second half, and after every score it must be used as

a means of putting the ball into play, but no goal can be scored from it.

A team is well equipped if it has in its repertoire about twenty-five plays, apportioned as follows:

16 rushes, consisting of 10 plunges, slants and sweeps, 3 reverse plays, and 3 tricks,

7 Forward Passes.

2 Kicks.

Some teams have as many as forty plays, but far better is it to have a few plays well learned, for it is the execution rather than the nature of the play which makes it successful.

In order that the above plays be utilized to their utmost effectiveness, it is usual that the offense employ three to four different formations as follows:

1. Close formation, from which a strong running attack by rushing is to be expected, but from which forward passing may develop (Diagram 1).

2. Open, or kick formation, which has wider scope in rushing, notably sweeps, but which maintains inherent strength both in plunges and slants as well as forward passing (Diagram 2).

3. Loose formation, wherein one or more of the backfields are placed where they can be of better service as interferers on slant plays and also to better advantage for receiving forward passes (Diagram 3).

4. Wide formation, used by certain teams to throw defense into confusion, thus obtaining an opening for either a forward pass or a rush (Diagram 4).

We have now reached a point where it is necessary to consider some of the rules which govern the game.

I regret this for it is dry stuff (so is law or the rules of any game) but I'll omit much and skip through the rest as briefly as possible. Be it understood then that in the use of its weapons of attack, the offense is confined by many rules in the deployment of their players, the chief of which are that when the ball is put in play:

a. At least seven men must be on the line of scrimmage.

b. Only one player may be in motion and that one under certain restrictions.

c. If a forward pass is tried, only the players on the ends of the scrimmage line, and such other players as are at least one yard or more behind the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped, are eligible to receive such pass, and further:

d. The pass must be delivered from a distance of at least five yards behind said scrimmage line.

In the conduct of their players the offense are also hampered by rules which state that:

a. When contact with opponents takes place, i.e., blocking and interfering, they shall not use their hands nor arms except as part of their bodies. This rule, however, does not include the player carrying the ball, usually termed the runner. An infraction of this rule constitutes holding.

b. "Thou shalt not clip, trip, nor crawl," to say nothing of minor rules whose infraction brings penalties involving the loss of distance ranging from five yards to fifteen yards.

c. "Thou shalt not fumble," roars the Coach.

These manifold and severe penalties incurring loss of distance, and fumbles causing loss of the ball, to say nothing of intercepted forward passes, create a "bugbear" for the offense. In fact it is so difficult for eleven men on the offense to conduct themselves within the many rules which confine them, with the possible loss of ball through fumbles and intercepted forward passes plus the stubbornness of the defense, that it is improbable that one team can gain in a series of plays more than thirty-five to forty yards. This fact must be seriously considered among the general principles of offense as applied to the theory of the attack.

In striking contrast to the confinement of the offense is the freedom of the defense, which may take position in any form desired, nor are they restricted in the use of their hands, except of the closed fist, in their endeavor to avoid their opponents, provided they make actual attempt to reach the player who is carrying the ball.

To be sure, the defense as well as the offense are subject to penalty for being offside, for unnecessary roughness, and for hindering the opponents from catching a forward pass, unless in so doing they are making an actual attempt to catch the ball themselves; but aside from these and minor restrictions they are practically immune from penalties.

However, just as there are offensive strategic principles, so the defense is governed by certain tactical axioms which must be added to the factors which cause victory or defeat (see Diagrams).

It is quite impossible in this chapter to give a full description of offensive strategy, nor are there at all times set rules which govern the quarterback's decision, but it is well to point out a few of the salient principles on which the theory of attack is based. Although at times the reasoning is somewhat close, yet it is essential that the spectator obtain a brief outline of the subject, as without it the whys and wherefores of the various offensive manoeuvres are meaningless.

Let us, then, begin with the statement that unless the offense advance with the ball in their possession ten yards or more in four or less consecutive attempts, they must surrender the ball to the defense. Having this as the sole object, how had they best proceed to accomplish the desired result?

In the discussion which follows, it is assumed that both teams are of about equal strength in the various departments of the game. If this be true, how, then, can one team ever defeat its opponent? By errors of commission and omission which creep into the play of one or the other. An axiom which has held true for years is "Other things being equal, the team which makes the fewest mistakes usually wins." Let us at once add this to the growing list of factors which result in success or failure.

Now let us for the moment step into the shoes, or rather look into the brain, of the offensive quarterback and view the kind of precepts which are stored there. Mind you, this is only the A B C of quarterback training, which varies in elasticity even as the

conventions of Auction Bridge. In Auction, conditions are constantly changing because not only are there different cards in every deal, but one's decision is always dependent upon such things as whether the player is dealing, or sits number two, three, or four position, also upon the score and whether it is "free double," and so on.

Or again, perhaps a better comparison is the similarity of strategy employed in baseball, wherein the actions of the pitcher and batter are governed with reference to the number of strikes and balls on the batter, the ability of the next batter, how many and on what bases the runners are, how many are out and what is the score and inning.

Apply these principles to football and we get the elasticity of judgment required of the quarterback. It always devolves upon him, with a warp of long training and a woof of common sense, to weave the various component factors into a fabric which shall fit the exigencies of every situation. With this as a background, the quarterback's Bible begins as follows:

In the selection of each and every play he must consider:

1. Climatic conditions which include the direction and velocity of the wind, the position of the sun, and the condition of the field of play, i.e., whether the footing is sure or slippery.

2. The position of the ball on the field of play, i.e., with respect to the goal line and side lines.

3. Which down it is and how much distance must be gained in order to obtain a first down.

Plate VI. A PUNT

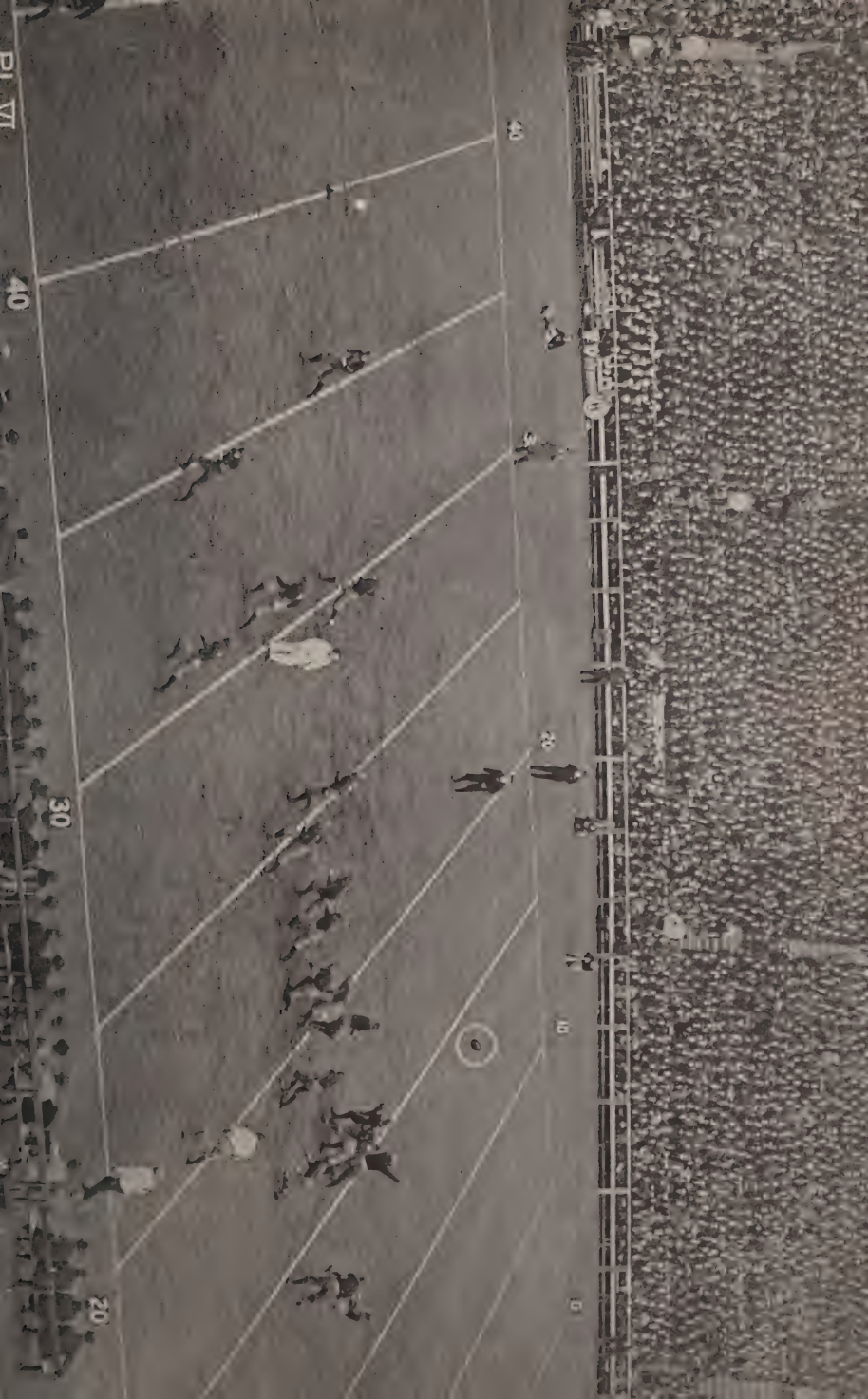
THE offense have kicked from right to left. Less than three seconds has elapsed since the ball was put in play. The defense have made a valiant attempt to block the kick (see player with upraised arms), and how nearly successfully may be judged by position of the ball.

On the 30 yard line are seen two offensive ends and a tackle on their way downfield to tackle the recipient (not shown in this picture) of the kick. The two defensive wing halves (35 yard line) may be seen beginning their hindrance against the two aforementioned ends.

The remaining linemen, having checked their opponents until there was no possibility of a blocked kick, are just getting under way near the twenty-five yard line.

Please note that all four officials are intently watching the actions of the players as is their duty. If the spectator will do likewise he will not only see the most interesting part of the play but may know the reason why certain penalties are sometimes inflicted.

Yale vs. Harvard 1920.



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Plate VII. A FORWARD PASS

A

THE player (1) at extreme left of the upper picture has made pretense of kicking thus drawing several defense linemen towards him. He has succeeded further in "freezing" the defense backfield, i.e., causing them to remain stationary until the nature of the play has been divulged.

Meanwhile, an offensive player (2), who is eligible to receive the pass, may be seen sneaking towards the opposite sideline.

The defense backfield (3) have just recognized this fact and are on their way to recover their momentary disadvantage.

The ball is already in flight and it would appear that, provided the pass were accurate, a long gain would result.

B

THE lower picture shows the same play from a different angle at the moment when the receiver (2) caught the ball.

The time consumed while the ball was in flight gave the defending halfback (3) opportunity to make up for his shortcomings of a few seconds earlier. Thus he was able, although menaced by an interjerer, to tackle the recipient of the pass for a gain of only five yards. Had he sensed the nature of the play earlier, he might have intercepted the pass.

Forward passes of this species are for this reason hazardous because when they are intercepted there are no players of the side which put the ball in play in position to prevent a long run against them.

Centre College vs. Harvard 1920.

4. What the score is, and how much time there remains before the close of the half or the game.

5. The distribution of the defense and its physical condition.

Considering only 2 and 3 in combination the quarterback is further burdened with a table of field tactics, which has been drummed into him daily since the beginning of the season, a brief outline of which runs as follows:

“Unless the wind is blowing against you,” reiterates the Coach, “whenever you are inside your own twenty yard line punt on the first or second down, because should a fumble occur and the enemy recover the ball, they have at once a golden opportunity to score.

“Between your own twenty and forty yard lines, utilize your various kinds of sweeps, which, though not consistent gainers, may result in good yardage, but don’t dare to use any forward pass which may be intercepted, nor any of those double passes for fear of a fumble. And remember, always punt on fourth down with more than two yards to go, because although you are theoretically surrendering the ball to your opponents, you gain thirty to forty yards in doing so.

“From your own forty yard line to your opponents’ thirty yard line you are allowed a greater choice of plays. Use your running attack and, by manipulating your formations, threaten at once the three salient arms of attack — the rush, forward pass, and kick. If your rushing tactics are successful don’t vary from them, but if you get held up on third down with five

yards to go, slip a forward pass or one of those trick plays. But under no circumstances be held for downs.

"If you reach your opponents' thirty yard line remember you are within scoring distance and concentrate on that word 'score.' Use your strongest rushing plays and when the defense stiffens, play your 'ace of trumps,' and if on fourth down you are doubtful about gaining the required distance, get your three points by shooting a drop kick."

Such advice, when thoroughly digested, taken in conjunction with the general principles which have been mentioned, constitute a basis for a correct selection of plays at the proper time.

Having waded through this theoretical side of the game, let us rest our wearied minds somewhat by the application of these theories to practical demonstrations of what actually happens during a game.

In watching a football game, I strongly advise the spectator to cultivate the habit of always knowing the down and distance, either by memory or by reference to the score board which we located when we first arrived at the field. In this way you can often anticipate the nature of the ensuing play especially if you will apply the doctrines which have been so forcibly impressed upon the quarterback. If we know it is fourth down and five yards to go, we can assume that the quarterback will order a kick. When it happens, we not only feel a certain satisfaction in having "called" the play, but through our fore-knowledge we are enabled to see the play with far greater detail

than otherwise. I cannot emphasize the importance of this suggestion too strongly.

The greatest failing of the average spectator is that he keeps his eyes glued to the ball, or the runner, during the progress of a play. In this way he misses entirely the eternal conflict between the offensive interferer and the defensive tackler. Now let it be thoroughly understood that the very essence of ground-gaining by rushing lies in this interference, i.e., clearing a path for the runner by other players of his side. That you may visualize the truth of this statement, let us for the moment assume that the offense consisted merely of a player to put the ball in play and a lone runner. The unhindered defense would overwhelm the runner before he could run a yard, kick or even pass with any accuracy. From this illustration, we can now see that it is solely through the co-operative efforts of all the eleven units of the offense that the various arms of attack can operate successfully. Thus when a plunge play is executed, it is the offensive line from tackle to tackle which enables the runner to reach even the line of scrimmage, and by its superior charge against its opponents enables him to squeeze through the first line of defense. (Plate II) Again, when a sweep is attempted, notice that usually two of the backfield are detailed to put the opposing end rush "out of commission." At the same time our offensive end and tackle are endeavoring to "box" or flank the defensive tackle. The remaining back, with perhaps the assistance of a linesman, rushes through the gap outside of

this tackle to attend to the rush line halfback who represents the second line of defense. In this way, the offense has thrown six interferers against the three of the defense, who are most likely to stop the runner without gain. (Plate III) Meanwhile, other linemen, after they have performed their protectionary assignments on the line of scrimmage, may be seen, ahead of the runner, harassing the wing halfbacks, or third line of defense. Time after time, you may see these interferers continue these tactics after the runner has been thrown. (Plate IV) The average spectator misconstrues their action either as unnecessary roughness or as wasted effort. Quite the contrary. It is their duty to engage certain of the defense at the moment when the runner, if untackled, arrives at that locality. Their eyes and attention being directed against their opponents, they are quite unable to tell whether the runner is tackled or not. In other words, they are performing their assignments irrespective of the fate of the runner, on the assumption that he will need their assistance if his path has been cleared to that point. Only on rare occasions does this occur, but when it does this interference on the third and even fourth line of defense converts a gain of say ten yards into a really long run which often as not results in a touchdown.

From the Coach's point of view, these interferers are the real heroes of a successful offensive play, albeit the runner often shows skill in eluding opponents either by clever dodging or by the use of a "straight-arm." (Plate V) One frequently sees a brilliant

run by a noted halfback, but he who attributes a good gain entirely to the runner not only does injustice to his teammates, but also misses one of the really fine points of football. Therefore, let me urge that you keep the runner in the tail of your vision, as it were, and direct your main attention on what transpires ahead of him.

Again, there is a strong tendency to watch the ball in its flight after it has been punted. In the interim, what occurs on the field of play? Note, before the ball is actually kicked, the rugged conflict between the onrushing defense and the offensive backs, who act as protectors for their kicker. (Plate VI) Were it not for the wall these backs thus form every attempted punt would be easily blocked. Even with their assistance the kicker is forced to perform his skillful act in a few seconds of time, else disaster will follow.

On another occasion, when on account of your knowledge of the down and distance you are reasonably sure a punt will ensue, watch the offensive ends begin their mad rush downfield at the snap of the ball, to be followed a second later by the tackles, while the guards and center hold their ground until all possibility of a blocked kick is eliminated. As the ends proceed, you will see the defensive wing halfbacks, after they have made sure that a rush or pass is not forthcoming, make every effort to impede the progress of the offensive ends, ending with a final lunge at them just as the ball is caught. Here is interference in another form which often enables the

player catching the punt to gain yardage otherwise not possible. To counterbalance this interference on the ends, many teams send a tackle downfield at the snap of the ball. (Plate VI)

Difficult as it is to see either a rush or kick in its entirety, it is quite impossible to visualize the great majority of forward passes. Not only is the intended direction and length of the pass unknown to the spectator, but often the very nature of the play is concealed by a pretence of the passer to do something else. The commonest form of thus outwitting the defense and deceiving the spectator as well, is a pretence of punting by the kicker, until the defense have been lured away from certain zones of territory, when by suddenly desisting from his punting motions, he is able to pass to one of his side at the point left vacant by the deluded defense. (Plate VII) Another trick which distresses the defense and spectator alike is when a clever player gives every indication of passing in one direction, and then suddenly hurls the ball to an unnoticed player in quite an opposite direction. Still again, a play which to all intents and purposes is a bona fide attempt to rush, will suddenly develop into a forward pass to the utter surprise of the defense. (Plate VIII)

Failing then to obtain regularly a comprehensive view of plays of this nature, the best we can do is to keep the tactical situation constantly in mind, i.e., down and distance, and thus try to anticipate the play or be content to watch the passer closely and marvel at his cleverness and the skill of the receiver.

Plate VIII. AN UNUSUALLY SUCCESSFUL FORWARD PASS

RARELY does the offense succeed in deluding the defense to such a marked degree. The play had all the appearance of a rush at its inception but by the clever passage of the ball from one player to another changed its aspect in a twinkling of the eye — not until, however, it had drawn the defense backfield away from the zone into which the pass was thrown.

The receiver was evidently entirely unnoticed by the defense, for he is seen in the act of catching the ball with no one near him. The play naturally resulted in a long gain, the runner finally being tackled by the defensive player whose shadow appears at the extreme left of the picture.

Harvard vs. Princeton 1921.

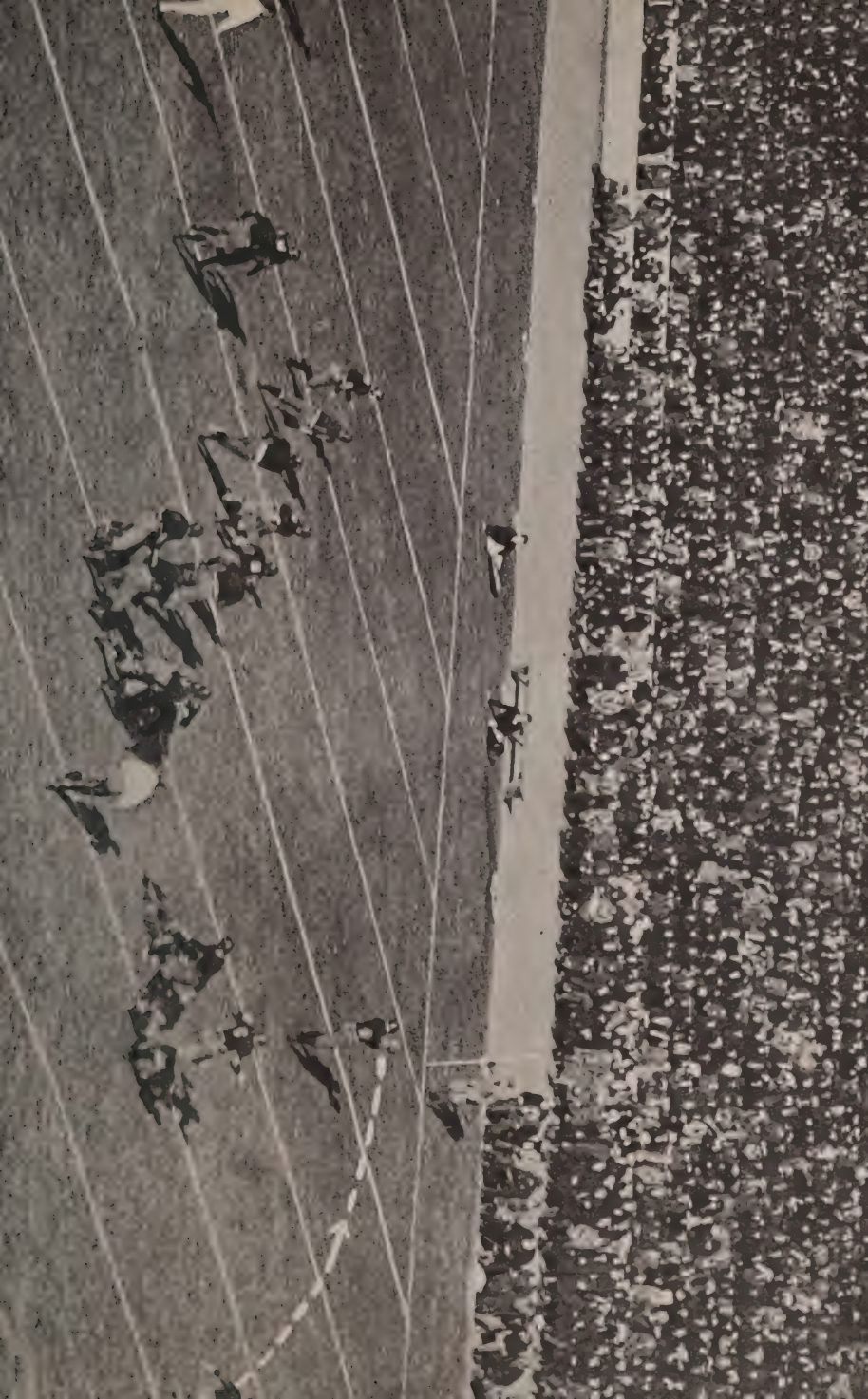




Plate IX. A CRISS-CROSS RUN

A

IN the top picture, the play was taken at the moment when the ball was being passed from one player (1) moving towards the camera to another player (2) going in the opposite direction.

Notice that the defense line has been momentarily blocked in order that the players engaged in the delicate operation just described might be thoroughly protected.

Meanwhile interference is forming against the defensive right end (3). The defensive backfield are shown in various degrees of uncertainty.

B

THE lower picture shows the same play, after the runner (2) is well under way and the defense in full cry after him.

The defensive right end (3) and tackle (4) are seen sprawling on the ground, leaving the runner with a valuable interferer ahead of him, to combat finally with the three defense backfield who are now fully aware of the final direction of the play. The play thus resolves into a race for the farther side line between them and the runner.

Note apprehension shown by attitude of man with white hat.

Centre College vs. Harvard 1920.

So far we have considered certain phrases from the offensive point of view only. We have learned that although practically every player on the offense is subject to a tremendous physical exertion in every play, yet he has the great advantage of knowing, through the medium of numerical signals, which of his team is to handle the ball, where the play is to be directed, and in case a starting signal is used when the ball is to be put into play.

The defense, on the other hand, have no knowledge of any of these all-important factors which in itself constitutes its greatest problem. Although the linemen are subject to great physical strain during every play, yet they and the entire backfield undergo at all times tremendous mental uncertainty as to what the offense is going to do next. By reference to the diagrams we can see how the various offensive formations are at once answered by a corresponding shift in the distribution of the defense, but having thus theoretically prepared for any move the offense may make, the moment the ball is put in play they are at once subjected to many pitfalls. Could they but recognize the signals, no offensive move would be successful. They must, however, remain in ignorance of its nature not only before the play begins, but for an appreciable time after it starts.

It is this necessary hesitancy of action which gives to the offense an initial advantage best illustrated by the cohesive charge of the offensive line. Were the opposing linemen certain of a plunging type of play they could easily meet the attack with little or no

gain, but the defensive tackle, for instance, has learned that he cannot afford always to plunge headlong at the apex of a play apparently aimed well to his left, because bitter experience has taught him that the play may, by a change of direction, develop to his right. So also an end must always beware of the dreaded criss-cross play which starts toward one end and by the concealed passage of the ball from one player to another develops in the opposite direction. (Plate IX)

Consider the predicament of a wing halfback who sees the runner dashing toward the flank which he is guarding. If the play is really a rush, he should move forward to tackle the runner before he has gained material distance. If, however, the play develops into a forward pass, it is his bounden duty to locate the player who is to receive the pass and to be in a proper position to intercept it. He is between the devil and the deep sea. In fact were it not for the rule which compels the offense to execute a forward pass at least five yards behind a line where the ball is put in play his position would be quite untenable.

At other times, when the forthcoming forward pass and the apparent receiver are patent to him, by following the receiver, who in reality is simply a decoy, he is enticed away from the locality where the pass will be caught by another and real receiver. That plays of this nature may not be consistently successful the defense, although sacrificing material strength on the line of scrimmage by so doing, are rapidly learning to withdraw their center some five yards from

the line and thus support the wing halfbacks in question, under such conditions as described.

This man who occupies the center position is well worth watching, individually, for he is called upon, against close running plays, to cope with the rugged work in the line. He must be fast enough to render immediate support to both tackle and end if playing as a rush line halfback, and under certain systems he must be sufficiently wise to control correctly the entire scheme of defense. In this respect, whether under his direction or not, the defense is governed by the same principles which determine the offensive strategy. We have learned that the offense quarterback is constantly influenced in his choice of plays by the down and distance to be gained, that if on fourth down there is but a scant yard to go for first down he will most likely rush and presumably use a plunging type of play. If third down and more than five yards to go he will tend towards the use of the forward pass. But if on fourth down and ten yards to go, unless some unusual circumstances exist, he will order a punt or else look forward to a bad half hour with an enraged coach.

Conversely, the defense is trained in the same line of thought, so that whatever formation the offense assumes, the defense not only respond with the proper theoretical formations, but direct their main attention towards coping with the kind of play (kick, rush, or pass) the offense will probably employ.

Reference to the diagrams shows the usual variations of defense, but all teams do not assume the

positions as drawn, so that the spectator should be constantly alert in noting the defensive formations, particularly when the offense threatens to punt. See if the defense responds by placing one or two men back to receive the kick. The main reason why they do not always put two men at full distance is for fear of a forward pass into a zone some ten to fifteen yards directly back from the line of scrimmage. A player is sorely needed at this point when a play of this nature is executed. On the other hand, one man alone against a punt cannot cover the width of the field, and an accurate punter will always take advantage of this fact by placing his kicks to one side. Or, should the punt come to him on the fly and he muff it, none of his side are near enough to render immediate assistance in recovering the ball. The spectator should realize that this "handling" of punts is of the most vital importance to the defense. Under the most favorable conditions it is an extremely difficult feat, but when the catcher is pitted against a spiral punt with wind and sun to complicate matters and fully aware that the instant he catches the ball there will be two or three opponents ready to bang him to the ground, know that it takes skill and a stout heart to combat this play successfully during the full hour's play.

If a muff does occur and the offense recover, it constitutes what is termed a "Break," that is, when the usual scheme of play is marred by an error of commission or omission of one of the players. As has been stated it is mistakes of this kind which often

win or lose a football game. Perhaps the worst break which can happen against a team is for the opponents to block a punt and recover the ball. It is not only the actual distance lost, but the psychological effect upon the offending team which plays such havoc.

Another type of break occurs when a team is gaining steadily and as they are approaching the enemy's goal (on third down) are penalized for holding. It often happens that the rush during which this infraction occurred gained a good ten yards and would have made a first down. Instead, the offending team is set back fifteen yards and the down remains the same, so that instead of first down on the opponent's fifteen yard line it is now third down on their forty yard line with twenty-five yards to gain. Thus the opportunity of scoring has been completely wiped out by the mistake of one individual.

Intercepted forward passes are the most spectacular form of break, because the play, from being a near-success, sometimes results in utter disaster. It is because of this "boomerang" effect that the offense use the forward pass so sparingly in their own territory.

At every game of football there sits, usually within earshot, an individual who persists in venting his feelings against the players on the field by a continuous line of "chatter." His creed appears to be that if his team gains or prevents their opponents from gaining, all is well. But when one of his team apparently misses a tackle, he sums up the situation by the word

"rotten." That man, and thank Heaven, this kind of person is confined to the male gender, either has never played football himself, or else is ignorant of the fact that tackles have been, are, and will be missed as long as football is played. Further, he fails to discern that most tackles are missed, not through the clumsiness of the would-be tackler, but through the cleverness of the runner. On another occasion when our interferers failed to "clean up" the opposing end rush, he caustically remarks "pretty bum attempt," not in the least recognizing that the end in question had by the use of his hand on the interferers' bodies, succeeded in ridding himself of them and by a superb tackle, downed the runner for a loss. The lesson he should learn then, is to give credit when and where it properly belongs.

A penalty for holding is incurred by our team. The referee with ball in hand, starts pacing off fifteen yards. "Robber!" yells our sportsmanlike neighbor. Aside from his unseemly remark, he is evidently ignorant of the fact that it is the umpire who inflicts penalties of this nature and that in this case, the referee is simply carrying out the verdict of the umpire. Be it known then, that the main duties of the referee have to do with the movement of the ball, while those of the umpire assisted by the field judge, have jurisdiction over the conduct of the players. The decisions of the officials are always given honestly and in the great majority of cases, correctly. Booing or complaining of their actions has no place in any amateur sport, albeit that it seems to have become a

privilege for the frenzied fan at professional baseball games.

This same individual is also apt to criticise loudly the quarterback for not doing otherwise than he did. Comes a critical situation. Which of the three arms of attack shall our quarterback employ? A kick, run or pass? He decides on one and the defense completely foil the attempt. Mr. Know-it-all at once shrieks his disapproval, "punk judgment."

To him I address the following: Kindly realize that the quarterback is a mere boy of twenty odd years; that, like as not, this is his first championship game (under the present eligibility rules, it cannot be more than his third); that he has been playing almost an hour against a rough and rugged team and has received many blows and hard falls that would have made either you or me quit long ago, that although he has had intensive training in the comparative quiet of secret practice, yet please know that it is quite a different matter to put into effect what has been taught him when eleven burly opponents are, figuratively speaking, endeavoring to beat his brains out and fifty to seventy thousand people are helping him to think straight by yelling their heads off.

And, finally, Mr. Smarty, that you may to some small degree appreciate the stress under which he is working, I give you for correct solution the following problem: Assume that you are standing in that quarterback's shoes; that your team has, by virtue of superhuman effort, or through your own cleverness, if you prefer, reached the enemy's two yard line. The

position of the ball is unfortunately well toward the sideline; it is fourth down and the goal line to go. The score is 6 to 3 against you and the Field Judge has just told you that there is less than two minutes to play in the final period of the game.

Let me assist you in your reasoning, as you stand there with your reputation quaking in the balance. You will notice that the enemy's line is greatly reinforced by two halfbacks who have quite rightly stationed themselves directly behind their two tackles, and look at the do or die expression on the faces of those three center men. The flanks are also strengthened by two wing halfbacks, who because the forward pass zone is restricted to ten yards beyond the goal line, have wisely taken position much nearer the scrimmage line than usual. But "take it from me" all four of the enemy's back field are on the alert for a forward pass into that narrow strip of legal territory and remember it is only necessary for them to bat the ball away from your receivers to constitute a touch back, in which case your goose is cooked. Somehow, the space between the goal posts appears unusually narrow as you consider trying to tie the score by kicking a drop goal, just as that golf hole looks the size of a pin head when you have a four foot putt for a halved match on the eighteenth green.

"I have it," you say, in faked calmness, "Even if I fail in my rush, the enemy will be compelled to punt from an awkward position, and we can make a fair catch and then tie the score by kicking a goal from placement."

“ Well, as long as you have decided on a rush, which one are you going to use, and go ahead and do something quickly, or the referee will penalize you two yards for delaying the game, and finally remember that of the three arms of attack, only one can be used in this last remaining try; therefore, theoretically, the odds are two to one against your successfully accomplishing whatever you attempt. Good luck to you! ”

DIAGRAMS

Diagram I

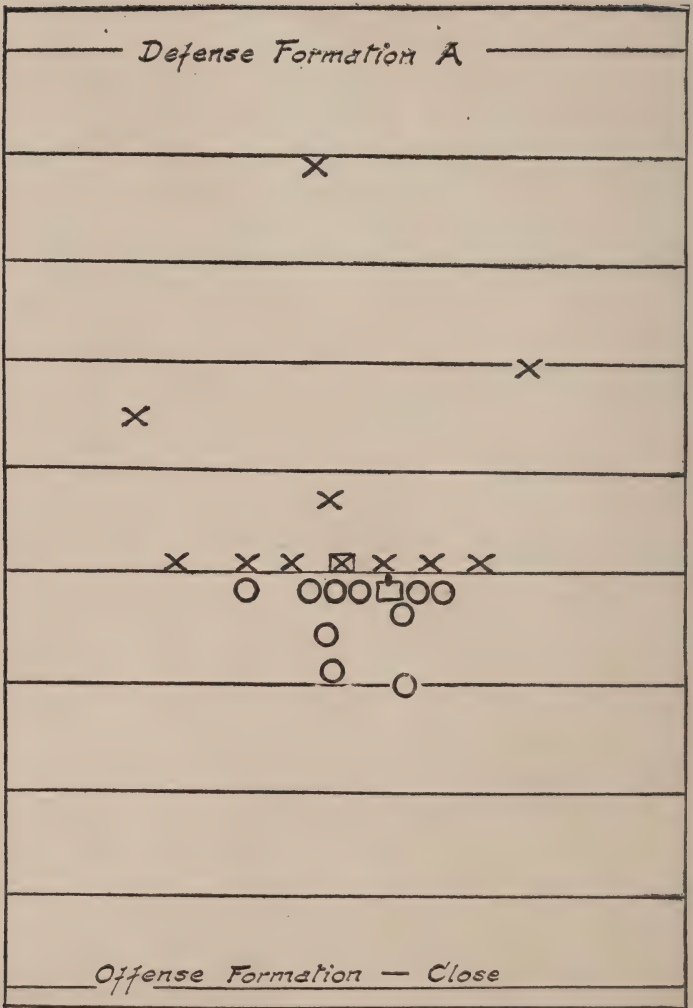


Diagram I

THE offense in close formation are able to attack by rushing all points on the primary line of defense. For this reason the latter, unless they anticipate a forward pass, usually place seven men on the line of scrimmage to combat the weight of the impending attack upon it.

A player of rugged build is stationed from three to four yards back of the first line of defense, opposite the apex of the offensive formation. This player, known as a rush line halfback, supports the line from tackle to tackle and constitutes the second line of defense. The other halfbacks (usually termed wingbacks) are forced to take position sufficiently removed to be on equal terms with possible receivers of the forward pass.

Owing to the predominating running strength of the offense on their left side, the defensive right wingback is called upon to support his end on all plays run in his direction. He, therefore, plays somewhat nearer the scrimmage line than the left wingback, whose main duty is to watch for a forward pass until he is certain that it is not forthcoming, after which he should assist his second line in preventing gains by rushing. The wing halfbacks are known as the third line of defense.

The remaining player, the fourth line of defense, is placed from twenty to thirty yards in the rear to cope with a possible quick kick or any pass or rush that reaches his territory.

Diagram II

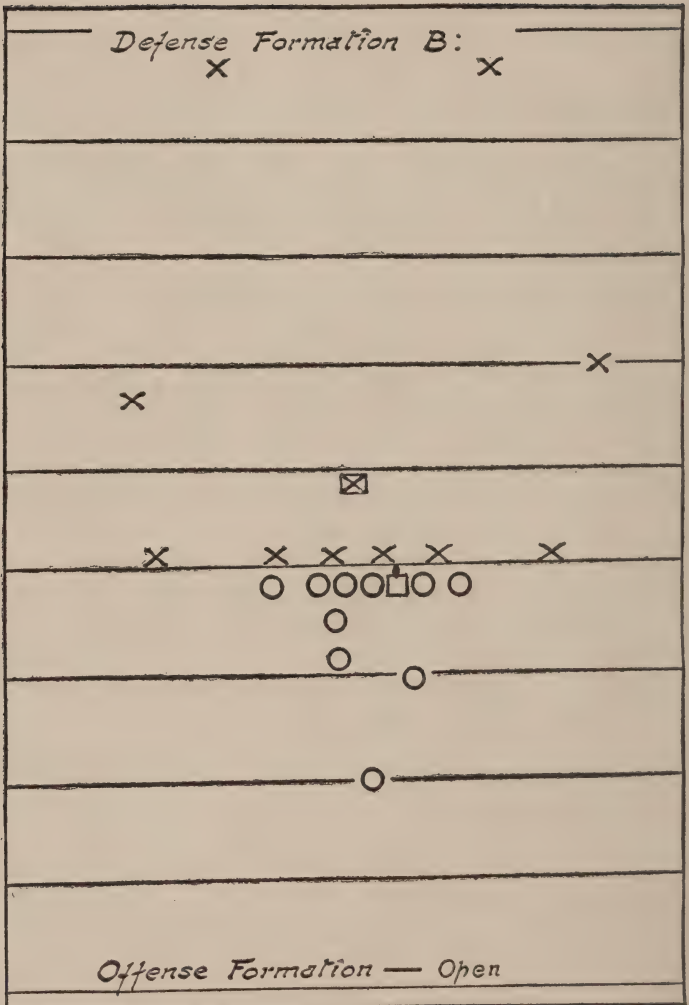


Diagram II

THE open formation is used primarily for kicking (the diagram is drawn for a left footed kicker). From it, however, are run plunges, slants and sweeps, the last type being so formidable as to cause a widening of the defense rush line. Forward passes of various kinds are also used, so that the defensive center is forced to fill the gap left vacant by the necessary changes in the backfield, caused by the threatened kick.

Versus this open formation the defense is thus stretched in width and depth. If too far in either direction, the offense at once takes advantage of the weak spot. Both the offense and defense vary considerably from the diagram in accordance with the immediate circumstances.

Diagram III

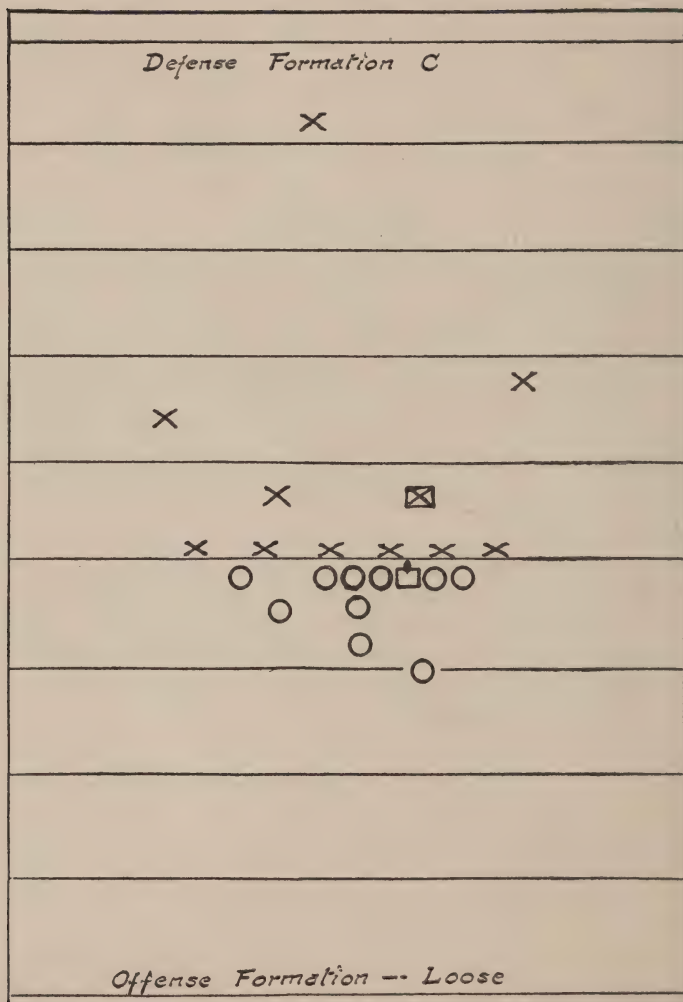


Diagram III

THE offense have loosened the distribution of their team laterally in an attempt to flank the defensive right tackle. By this arrangement also they have so grouped their backfield as to enable them the more easily to wend their way through the opposing line in order to receive forward passes.

For this reason the defense, although sacrificing material strength on the primary line, are forced to withdraw their center rush who is thus able to assist his backfield not only against plays of this nature but also to lend much-needed support to the weakened scrimmage line.

The third and fourth lines of defense remain unchanged.

Diagram IV

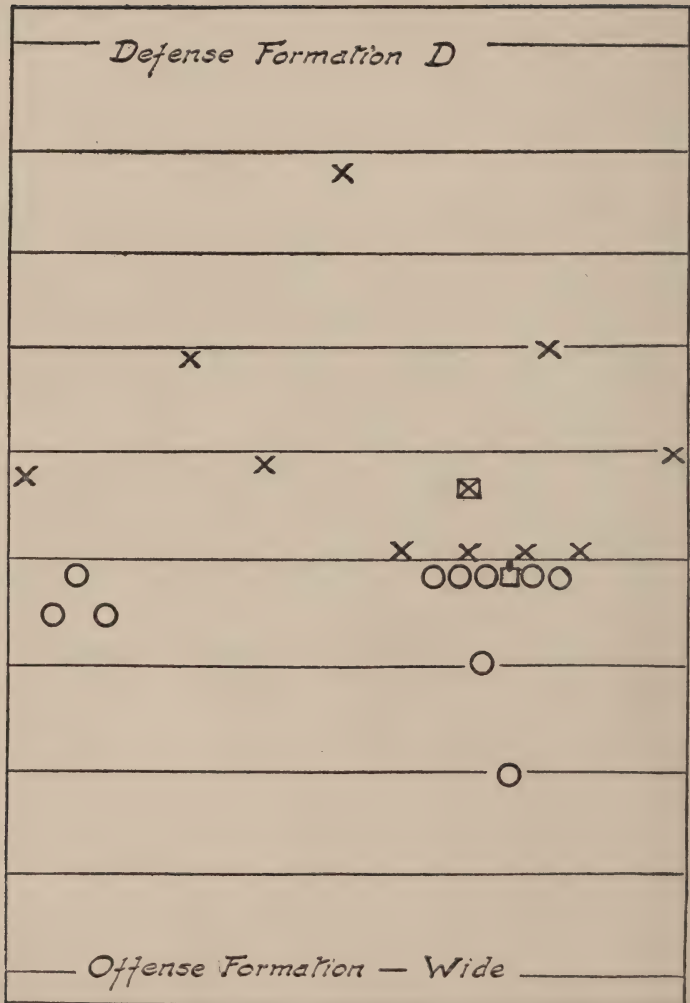


Diagram IV

THE offense have now assumed a formation in which there remains so little rushing strength of a plunging nature, that the defense leave only the two guards and two tackles to combat with it. The rest of the team is so placed as to best cope with forward passes or wide runs.

On account of the width of the offensive formation it is so difficult for the defensive backfield to cover laterally their respective zones, that the defensive ends are called upon not only to protect the flanks against sweeps, but also to guard flat zones on or about the extended line of scrimmage, into which the offense are apt to make a forward pass.

To adequately accomplish these two important duties, they are compelled to take station some five yards back of the scrimmage line.

The backfield are thus allowed to maintain the same relative positions as shown in Diagram III.

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